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**The Phenomenon of Digraphia In Islamic Education:
Students' Use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) Script at
Thamavitya Mulniti School In Yala, Thailand**

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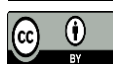
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ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by the discovery of the phenomenon of digraphia in Arabic language learning. Efforts to preserve identity take the form of using two writing systems—Arabic-Malay (Jawi) and Standard Arabic—in Arabic language instruction; the preservation of identity in question refers to the preservation of the Malay Islamic identity found in southern Thailand. The objective of this study is to identify the causes of the digraphia phenomenon and to examine the implementation of the use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) in Arabic language learning. The research method employed is a qualitative research method using a phenomenological approach, with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of this study indicate that the phenomenon of digraphia occurs due to the active use of two languages in Southern Thailand—Thai and Malay—and that Arabic-Malay is chosen as a secondary script to aid in the Arabic language learning process. The implementation of the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script facilitates students' learning of Arabic—from writing and reading skills to the ability to communicate in Arabic.

Keywords: *Digraphia, Arabic-Malay, Arabic Language*



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Introduction

Thamavitya Mulniti School, known locally as Ma'had Al-Bi'that Addiniah, is one of the largest private Islamic schools in Yala Province. The school enjoys a strong reputation for successfully integrating the Islamic religious curriculum with Thailand's national curriculum. With more than 6,700 students, the school's enrollment reflects the community's deep trust in it. Since its inception, Thamavitya Mulniti School has upheld a vision to nurture a generation of Muslims who are devout, knowledgeable, and globally competitive. This mission is realized through an educational strategy that balances religious studies, general education, and character development. This vision aligns with the needs of the Malay-Patani community, who want their children to remain steadfast in their Islamic faith while also being able to adapt to the modern world (Aslam, 2025).

What makes this school unique is its dual-curriculum approach. In the morning, students study religious subjects such as the Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh, Tawhid, and Arabic, with Malay-Jawi serving as the medium of instruction. In the afternoon, they study general subjects such as mathematics, science, social studies, Thai, English, and physical education, with Thai as the medium of instruction. This system allows students to master two worlds at once: the religious world and the modern world (Nurdin, 2025).

Uniquely, in this school environment, there are two types of languages used—namely, Thai and Southern Thai Malay—but in religious education classes, they use Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script as a teaching aid to help teachers explain the material. Similarly, in Arabic language classes, they use two forms of writing for the same language; this has become a new teaching method that the researcher discovered in Arabic language instruction (Nurdin, 2025).

In sociolinguistic studies, the term “digraphia” refers to the phenomenon of using two different writing systems or alphabets for the same language within a single speech community (Elti, 2019). Digraphia does not occur by chance; rather, it is influenced by social, cultural, historical, religious, and educational policy factors. Florian Coulmas, in the journal **Sveva Elti di Rodeano**, in an article titled “Digraphia: The Story of a Sociolinguistic Term,” explains that the choice of a writing system often reflects the social identity and ideology of a particular social group, so that the use of a specific script is not merely technical but also symbolic (Elti, 2019).

This phenomenon shows that writing has a social dimension that is just as important as spoken language. There is also a great deal of literature discussing dysgraphia, which is related to writing; however, dysgraphia is a barrier that students or individuals face in conveying their ideas through writing (Sit Fuadah & Dkk, 2023). More specifically, digraphia refers to the use of two writing systems within the same language, while dysgraphia is a writing disorder experienced by students or individuals.

The phenomenon of digraphia is often found in the use of standard Arabic script alongside non-standard or modified forms of writing, such as Arabic-Malay (Jawi or Pegon). Arabic-Malay is a writing system based on the Arabic script that is used to write the Malay language and has long served as a medium for transmitting Islamic knowledge in Southeast Asia (Ulfa, 2024). Not only in Southeast Asia, but the use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) is also still practiced throughout the Indonesian archipelago, particularly in regions with a Malay majority such as Riau, where the study of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script is still preserved and incorporated into both formal and non-formal education. -Malay (Jawi) is one of the required subjects they have established, as Riau is a region that places a very high priority on preserving Malay culture in the Indonesian archipelago.

In an earlier article written by Edy Adatta Barus and Sri Mawaddah in a journal titled “The History of the Arabic-Malay Script: A Cultural Heritage and Symbol of Islamic Identity in the Archipelago,” the authors explain that the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script is not merely a means of communication but also serves as a symbol of Islamic identity in Southeast Asia (Barus & Mawaddah, 2025).

Furthermore, in educational practice—particularly in Arabic language instruction—the use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) often coexists with the standard Arabic script. This situation creates a state of digraphia, in which students are confronted with two distinct yet interrelated writing systems. The views of Edy Adatta Barus and Sri Mawaddah are closely related to the digraphia phenomenon occurring at Thamavitya Mulniti School in Thailand, namely the use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script in religious education—including, for example, in Arabic language instruction.

The researcher was interested in investigating the causes of digraphia in the learning process at Thamavitya Mulniti School in Thailand, where the Arabic script -Malay (Jawi) script as an introductory writing system in religious

education—including Arabic language instruction—the researcher conducted extensive searches through various academic references in Indonesia that discuss the phenomenon of digraphia; however, the researcher did not find any discussions specifically addressing digraphia. as most references discussed diglossia and dysgraphia. Consequently, the researcher sought to contribute to a new body of scholarly knowledge, particularly within Arabic language studies, regarding the phenomenon of digraphia occurring in Arabic language instruction, under the title “The Phenomenon of Digraphia in Islamic Education: Students’ Use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) at Thamavitya Mulniti School in Yala, Thailand.

Theoretical Study

The term “digraphia” relates to writing; in a sociolinguistic context, “digraphia” refers to the use of two writing systems or two alphabets within a single language (Elti, 2019). The term “digraphia” was first coined by Ferguson following his discovery regarding diglossia. Ferguson defined digraphia as “the coexistence of two or more writing systems, as well as the coexistence of two variants of a single writing system with differing functions or prestige”(Defrancis, 2015). In other words, digraphia is a phenomenon characterized by the coexistence of two or more writing systems, as well as the coexistence of two variants of the same writing system with different uses.

Dale also states that, according to his definition, digraphia is “,” which can be interpreted as the use of two or more writing systems to represent a single language (Berlanda, 2006). Dale also divides digraphs into two types, namely: *Digrafia sinkronis*: the use of more than one writing system simultaneously for the same language; *Digrafia diakronis*, the use of more than one writing system for a particular language during consecutive periods or times.

The phenomenon of digraphia was identified after Ferguson coined the term “diglossia,” which refers to the use of two language varieties within the same environment for different purposes. (Herdiana et al., 2026). Ferguson explained that diglossia occurs when a society uses a high variety of the language for formal purposes such as education, administration, and academic writing, while a low variety is used in everyday communication. This concept later evolved and is no longer limited to differences in spoken varieties, but also encompasses differences in writing systems, which in certain contexts are referred to as digraphia (Rahma & Wiguna, 2024). While digraphia refers to the

use of two or more writing systems, diglossia refers to the use of two or more language varieties within the same environment.

Meanwhile, from a psycholinguistic perspective, there is research on writing difficulties known as dysgraphia. According to Wijaya (2020) in the journal article by Sofi Siti Fuadah et al., dysgraphia is a learning disability characterized by difficulties in applying or conveying ideas or thoughts in written form (Sit Fuadah & Dkk, 2023). In addition, digraphia is often compared to dysgraphia because both are related to the writing system; however, dysgraphia is the opposite of digraphia, as it is a learning disability faced by students characterized by an inability to convey ideas through writing (Ikhsandi et al., 2023). It can be concluded that dysgraphia is a difficulty experienced by an individual or student in writing, whereas digraphia is the use of two or more writing systems within the same context.

The phenomenon of digraphia occurs more frequently in bilingual or multilingual countries or regions due to the variety of languages used in people's daily lives; this creates a high potential for digraphia to emerge, driven by specific factors aligned with the needs of the population in each region. The phenomenon of digraphia observed at Thamavitya Mulniti School is closely linked to the efforts of minority communities in Thailand to preserve their culture and religion. Based on the classification of digraphia, the type observed at Thamavitya Mulniti School in Thailand falls under diachronic digraphia, as two writing systems are used simultaneously for the same language—specifically, the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script and Standard Arabic script are used concurrently as the medium for teaching Arabic.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach, as it aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of digraphia that occurs in Arabic language learning related to the use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script in Arabic language instruction at Thamavitya Mulniti School in Thailand (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011).

In this study, the researcher conducted unstructured interviews to avoid gaps in data collection. The interviews were conducted with several informants, namely, teachers from the general curriculum department, teachers from the Islamic curriculum department, teachers in charge of Arabic language and Islamic studies, as well as three students from the Arabic Club. The

researcher also conducted direct field observations by participating in teaching activities in the Arabic Club classroom for the Arabic language course for one month, allowing the researcher to observe the learning process firsthand. The researcher then documented the findings using digital media—specifically a smartphone—to collect data in the form of photographs taken during the study, interview recordings, and documentation of the textbooks used at Thamavitya Mulniti School.

The phenomenological approach allows researchers to explore the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of teachers and students regarding the use of two writing systems—Arabic-Malay (Jawi) and Standard Arabic—in the learning process. Through the informants' experiences, researchers can understand how the use of these two writing systems influences the processes of reading, writing, and understanding the material, as well as the interactions that occur during the learning process, particularly in Arabic language instruction (Nuryana et al., 2019). This study not only describes the existence of the phenomenon of digraphia, but also reveals the meaning and experiences underlying the use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script in Islamic studies at Thamavitya Mulniti School in Thailand.

Results and Discussion

A. A Brief History of the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) Script

Arabic-Malay script, often referred to as Jawi, is one of the most important cultural legacies in the spiritual and intellectual history of the Malay people. Ellya Roza states in her article titled "The Arabic-Malay (Jawi) Script in the Archipelago and Its Contribution to the Development of Intellectual Heritage" that the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script is a collaboration between the Arabic script and the Malay language, with adjustments and the addition of letters to accommodate the phonological elements of the Malay people. In other words, the Arabic-Malay script consists of 29 Arabic letters, ranging from alif to ya' (ا-ي), supplemented by five additional letters that are not part of the Arabic alphabet but were created by the Malay people themselves to accommodate their specific phonemic needs. These additional letters are: cha: چ (ha with three dots), nga: غ (ain with three dots), pa: ف (fa with three dots), ga: ك (kaf with a dot), va: و (wau with a dot), and nya: ن (nun with three dots) (Roza, 2017).

Historically speaking, the Arabic-Malay script—also known as the Jawi script—originated from an adaptation of the Arabic script used to write the

Malay language. Its emergence is closely linked to the arrival and spread of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago from around the 7th to the 13th centuries CE. Before the arrival of Islam, the Malay people were already familiar with several writing systems, such as the Pallava and Kawi scripts; however, their use was limited to royal circles and administrative purposes. As Islam began to spread, the Arabic script was introduced by Muslim merchants and scholars from Arabia, Persia, and India (Herniti, 2017).

The Arabic script was subsequently used as the primary medium for writing Islamic teachings, gradually replacing the previous script; during its spread, the Arabic script underwent adjustments to align with the phonetic system of the Malay language. Since Malay has a number of phonemes not found in Arabic, additional letters were created, such as pa (ڤ), ga (ڠ), nga (ڭ), nya (ڬ), and ca (چ). (Taqiyyah & Mawaddah, 2025).

From the brief history above, it can be seen that the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script was fundamentally influenced by the arrival of Islam via trade routes; subsequently, merchants from Arabia, India, and Persia brought the Arabic language as the language of trade, until eventually the Malay people began to learn the Arabic script. However, because they did not fully understand the Arabic script, the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script emerged—that is, the writing of the Malay language using Arabic letters (Hasan & bintii daud, 2020).

In essence, the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script was also influenced by Persian; however, why is it referred to only as Arabic-Malay (Jawi) and not Arabic-Malay-Persian? This is explained by Abdul Hadi W.M. in his essay titled “Traces of Persia in the History of Malay Culture and Literature.” He explains that while Persian influence on the development of Arabic -Malay (Jawi) is evident in the Malay script, literature, and Islamic traditions. The Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script not only adopted Arabic letters but was also influenced by Arab-Persian writing traditions, such as the use of the nasta’liq style in manuscripts and Eastern Kufi on ancient tombstones (Hadi W.M, 2010).

This indicates that the process of Islamization and the development of Malay written culture were influenced not only directly by the Arabs, but also through Persian cultural and intellectual intermediaries, who played a significant role in shaping the Arab-Malay character as a writing system and Islamic scholarly tradition in the Indonesian archipelago. From Hadi W.M.’s writing, it is very clear that Persia also contributed to the formation of the Arab-Malay script (Jawi), which should more accurately be named the Malay-Arab-

Persian script. However, it is not yet known for certain why Persia was not included in the script's naming, even though, in terms of its writing style, the Arab-Malay (Jawi) script is identical to Persian script. The differences between Arabic, Persian, and Arabic-Malay scripts can be seen in the image below:

Table 1. Types of Arabic Letters

ا	alif	ز	za'	ق	qaf
ب	ba'	س	sin	ك	kaf
ت	ta'	ش	syin	ل	lam
ث	sa'	ص	sad	م	mim
ج	jim	ض	dad	ن	nun
ح	ha'	ط	ta'	و	waw
خ	kha'	ظ	za'	ه	ha'
د	dal	ع	ain	ء	hamzah
ذ	zal	غ	ghain	ي	ya'
ر	ra'	ف	fa'		

Source: Eva Dwi's thesis (Dewi, 2021).

Table 2. Types of Arabic-Malay Scripts

ا	alif	ز	zai	ق	qof
ب	ba	س	sin	ك	kaf
ت	ta	ش	syin	ل	lam
ث	tsa	ص	shad	م	mim
ج	jim	ض	dhad	ن	nun
ح	ha	ط	tha	و	waw
خ	kh	ظ	zha	ه	ha
د	dal	ع	ain	ء	hamzah
ذ	dzal	غ	ghain	ي	ya
ر	ro	ف	fa	ف	pa
گ	ga	غ	nga	ث	nya
چ	ca				

Source: (Ulfa, 2024).

Table 3. Types of Persian Scripts

ا	alif	ذ	zal	ع	ain	ه	he
ب	be	ر	re	غ	ghain	ي	ye
پ	pe	ز	ze	ف	fe		
ت	te	ژ	zhe	ق	qaf		
ث	se	س	sin	ك	kaf		
ج	jim	ش	shin	گ	gaf		
چ	che	ص	sad	ل	lam		
ح	he	ض	zad	م	mim		
خ	khe	ط	ta	ن	nun		
د	dal	ظ	za	و	vav		

Source: Website: Persian Language Online (Language Online, 2024).

From these three sets of characters, it is clear that the Persian script shares similarities with the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script in terms of the addition of characters beyond the Arabic alphabet; this demonstrates that there was indeed a Persian influence in the development of the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script. However, in this study, the researcher will not delve too deeply into the history of the formation of the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script, as the primary focus is on discussing the phenomenon of digraphs in Arabic language learning using the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script.

B. Digraphia as a Means of Preserving Identity

The use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) in southern Thailand has deep historical roots and is inseparable from the process of Islamization in the Pattani region dating back to around the 13th century CE. As Islam spread through scholars and merchants from the Islamic world and the Indonesian archipelago, the Arabic script began to be used as a tool for proselytizing, education, and administration (Barus & Mawaddah, 2025). The Arabic script was later adapted for writing the Malay language and became known as the Arabic-Malay script or Jawi. During the era of the Pattani Darussalam Sultanate, Arabic-Malay (Jawi) served as the official script for religious texts, customary law, royal correspondence, and Islamic literary works, making it not only a tool for written communication but also a symbol of Islamic and Malay

identity for the Muslim Malay community in the region (Jehwae, 2019). In southern Thailand, the Arabic-Malay script is more commonly known as “Arab-Jawi”; although the name is different, Arab-Jawi is essentially the same as the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script known in Indonesia—it uses characters similar to the Arabic alphabet but includes additional letters to accommodate the vowels of the Malay language.

The Jawi script, or Jawi alphabet, is an alphabet used to write the Malay language. The names for this alphabet vary from region to region. In Java, it is better known as the Pegon script; however, some argue that Arab-Pegon and Arab-Jawi are different: Arab-Pegon refers to writing that uses the Arabic script but is in the Javanese language, whereas Arab-Jawi refers to writing that uses the Arabic script but is in the Malay language (Fatkhu Romadhon, 2022).

While in Patani it is known as Jawi, in Sumatra and other regions it is known as the Arabic-Malay script. According to interviews conducted by the researcher on the term “Arab-Jawi” in Southern Thailand, this term consists of two parts: first, “Arab” refers to the origin of the script—that is, from Arabic script—and second, “Jawi” uses the Hijaiyah letters such as: ا, ب, ت, etc. Second, “Jawi” refers to the Malay world (Nusantara) in Islamic history; Arabs referred to the Southeast Asian region as “al-Jawah,” so the Malay people were called Jawi, the Malay language was called the Jawi language, and the Malay script written in Arabic letters was called the Jawi script (Arfan, 2025).

In the social and religious life of the Muslim Malay communities in southern Thailand—particularly in Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Songkhla—Arab-Malay (Jawi) continues to be used to this day, especially in religious and cultural contexts. This script is used in the composition of classical Islamic texts, translations and commentaries on Arabic texts, prayers, devotional recitations, and religious notes. Furthermore, Arabic-Malay (Jawi) serves as a marker of cultural identity that distinguishes the Muslim Malay community from the Thai majority, while also serving as a medium for passing down Islamic scholarly traditions from one generation to the next.

In the field of education, Arabic-Malay (Jawi) still plays an important role, particularly in Islamic educational institutions such as traditional Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren), madrasahs, and private Islamic schools. In these institutions, Arabic-Malay (Jawi) is often used as an introductory language to help students understand Arabic texts, whether through

translations, vocabulary explanations, or analyses of sentence structure (Rizkia & Mawaddah, 2025).

In Arabic language instruction, the use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) helps students understand the meaning of Arabic texts and vocabulary more easily because of its similarity to their native language, Malay. This has led to the practice of using two writing systems side by side: the standard Arabic script for the Arabic language and Arabic-Malay (Jawi) for explanations and interpretation, a phenomenon known as digraphia.

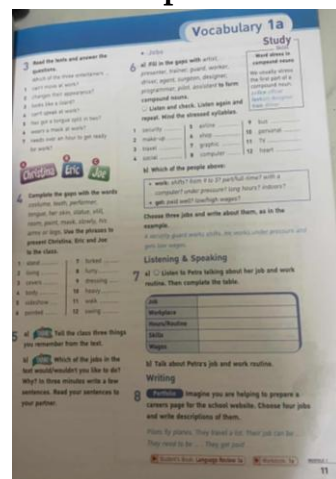
The phenomenon of digraphia in Southern Thailand has become increasingly complex because students are confronted not only with two writing systems, but with several at once: the Arabic script, the Arabic-Malay script, the Thai script as the national writing system, and the Latin script—often referred to in Southern Thailand as “rumi”—in modern and technological contexts. This multigraphic situation allows Arabic-Malay (Jawi) to function as a linguistic bridge in Arabic language learning; however, at the same time, it also has the potential to cause interference, such as the mixing of Arabic and Arabic-Malay (Jawi) spelling rules in writing or pronunciation. Below are several forms of digraphia that occur in the classroom at Thamavitya Mulniti School in Thailand, sourced from (Amir, 2025).

Figure 1. Textbook Written In Thai



Interview with a researcher and students from the Arabic Club:: (Amir, 2025)

Figure 2. Textbook Written In The Latin Alphabet



Interview with a researcher and students from the Arabic Club:: (Amir, 2025)

Figure 3. A Textbook Written In Arabic-Malay (Jawi) Script

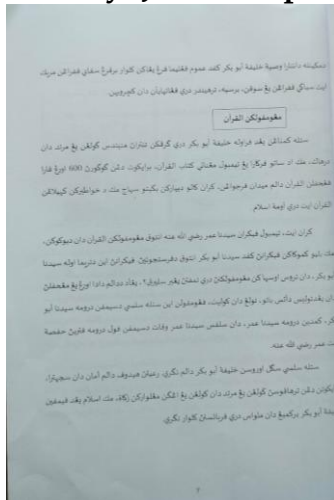


Figure 4. Textbook Written In Arabic



Interview with a researcher and students from the Arabic Club. (Amir, 2025)

Interview with a researcher and students from the Arabic Club:: (Amir, 2025)

Figure 1 shows a textbook used in general education that employs the Thai script as an introductory text for learning, such as in mathematics. Figure 2 shows a textbook using the Latin script—often referred to in Southern Thailand as “Melayu Rumi”—which is frequently used in English language instruction as well as in the study of Malay culture. Figure 3 shows a textbook using the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script, which is used in Islamic studies such as Akidah Akhlak, Tarikh Islam, and others; and Figure 4. shows a textbook written in Arabic, as it is used for Arabic language instruction (Amir, 2025). These four types of textbooks demonstrate the presence of digraphia at Thamavitya Mulniti School in Thailand, which occurs during the dual-curriculum learning process faced by students at Thamavitya Mulniti School in Thailand.

Amid the dominance of the Thai script in the national education system and the influence of globalization, which has reinforced the use of the Latin script, the existence of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) faces various challenges, including a decline in the younger generation’s ability to read and write Arabic-Malay (Jawi) and a lack of modern teaching materials that accommodate this script; however, Arabic -Malay (Jawi) script is still preserved in Islamic educational institutions as part of efforts to preserve cultural identity and Malay Islamic scholarly traditions. Thus, the use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) in Southern Thailand not only holds historical and cultural value but also has significant pedagogical

implications for Arabic language learning, particularly in the context of research on the phenomenon of digraphia.

In addition, the existence of the digraphia phenomenon in southern Thailand is also driven by historical factors that have compelled the people of southern Thailand to preserve their identity as Malay; and the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script is one of the key aspects reflecting this strong Malay ethnic identity. Consequently, in the education of the Malay community in southern Thailand, the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script is used -Malay (Jawi) script is used in religious education—such as fiqh, hadith, aqidah, Islamic history, and Arabic language—among the Malay communities in southern Thailand. The use of the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script is an effort to preserve Malay identity and prevent Malay culture from becoming extinct (Arfan, 2025).

C. The Phenomenon of Digraphia in Islamic Education at Thamavitya Mulniti School in Thailand

The researcher conducted direct observations of the school environment at Thamavitya Mulniti School (TVM). From these observations, the researcher found instances of digraphia in Arabic language instruction. This phenomenon took the form of the use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) when the teacher explained Arabic grammar rules and when translating the meanings of Arabic vocabulary words that the students did not understand.

For example, in the explanation regarding the past tense (fi'il madi)—where the fi'il madi is a verb referring to an action that has already occurred—the teacher writes the sentence “اكو تله فرخي ك سكولاه.” The teacher then explains that “I went to school” is an action that has already taken place because it has occurred; similarly, the fi'il madi is used only for actions that have already occurred. By using analogies with Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script in the explanation, students find it easier to understand the material presented by the teacher. From a psycholinguistic perspective, this approach to teaching Arabic employs the theory of cognitivism, which focuses on understanding and deepening language proficiency. The theory of cognitivism is frequently used in translation (Putri et al., 2025).

Interestingly, they very rarely use Thai script for teaching Arabic. Based on an interview conducted by the researcher with a student named Husni (2025), he opined that “ *I understand, teacher explain word-for word translation and I understand teacher explain using Arabic-Jawi*” According to Husni, a student from southern Thailand, he understands the teacher's explanations better when they

are written in Arabic-Malay (Jawi) rather than in Thai (Husni, 2025). Based on the data collected by the researcher, students are taught the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script starting in kindergarten; that is, by the time they are 4–6 years old, they have already been taught the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script, so it is only natural that they better understand explanations presented in the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script.

The use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) in Arabic language instruction can make it easier for students to learn to write and read Arabic script. This was also mentioned by Ahmad, a student born in Saudi Arabia who moved to Thailand at the age of 11; as a result, his first language is Arabic. For the next five years, he studied Thai and Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script. Ahmad believes that “ Like if they really wanna learn about it, of course they can learn it easily” Ahmad said that Ara-Melayu (Jawi) would help his friends learn the language more easily (Ahmad, 2025).

“ My first impression was that Arabic-Jawi writing is a fascinating blend of language, and culture—it shows how Arabic script was adapted to fit Malay sounds, creating something unique and meaningful” because, in his view, Arabic-Malay (Jawi) is a very unique and interesting script due to the combination of Arabic script and additional characters created to accommodate Malay phonemes (Ahmad, 2025). The success of using Arabic-Malay (Jawi) as a tool to help explain concepts—which in turn helped teachers deliver their explanations—is evident in the students’ ability to communicate with the researcher in Arabic; although they spoke slowly, they understood the researcher’s intended meaning.

In Arabic language instruction at Thamavitya Multinational School, the use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) serves not only as a pedagogical tool but also as a representation of students’ cultural and religious identity; in the simple sense that they do not view the language merely as part of language proficiency; rather, they believe the language is a revelation that strengthens their religious culture or Islam. Therefore, mastery of the four language skills is not emphasized in the learning process.

Ustazah Nariman, as the Arabic language instructor, believes that “students only learn basic Arabic; they are not expected to be able to read classical texts, nor do they study i’rab in depth.”(Nariman, 2025). This statement indicates that Arabic language instruction is planned with content tailored to students’ abilities and learning outcomes; this aligns with the findings of the study by

Hasrian Rudi Setiawan et al., which highlights the importance of planning as a means of achieving learning objectives, particularly in Arabic language instruction (Rudi Setiawan et al., 2021).

Learning Arabic through a blend of Arabic script - Malay (Jawi) presents a unique challenge for researchers because in Indonesia, Arabic-Malay (Jawi) is only taught as a local content subject, even though it is still used in certain regions such as Riau, and its use in Arabic language instruction at modern Islamic boarding schools or public schools is very rare; it is more commonly used in traditional Islamic boarding schools under the name "Arab-Pegon." In their journal article, Maulana et al. explain that the implementation of the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script in Arabic language instruction helps students understand the basics of Nahwu. (Maulana & Rayhan, 2024). Pernyataan tersebut sangat sejalan dengan penggunaan tulisan Arab-Melayu (Jawi) sebagai tulisan pengantar pembelajaran bahasa Arab pada pembelajaran bahasa Arab di Thamavitya Mulniti School Thailand.

However, in Southern Thailand—specifically at Thamavitya Mulniti School—Arabic-Malay (Jawi) is actively used in daily life; even the names of buildings such as mosques, streets, and shops are written in Arabic-Malay. This is due to the need to preserve the Malay Islamic identity in Southern Thailand; in addition to preventing Arabic-Malay (Jawi) from falling into disuse—as it is currently used very actively—this also aims to preserve the legacy of the early Malay people in Southern Thailand.

Ustaz Arfan, a faculty member in charge of the Islamic studies curriculum at Thamavitya Mulniti School, stated that "If the Jawi script were to disappear, the evidence of the Malay presence in Patani—that we are a Malay people who once had our own kingdom and are not of Thai origin—would vanish. This is one of the core aspects of the Malay identity in Patani" (Arfan, 2025). From this statement, it is very clear that the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script is not merely a writing system but a strong symbol of the Malay identity in Thailand; it is even regarded as evidence of Islam, not merely a cultural heritage of the Malay people.

One of the earlier works has discussed that the Arabic-Malay script (Jawi) serves as both a symbol and an identity for the Malay community, capable of bridging spiritual Islamic teachings with local Malay culture by utilizing the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script as an alternative to standard Arabic script due to their near-identical writing systems; which makes it easier for the Malay

community to understand classical texts written in Arabic-Malay (Jawi) without having to fully understand and master standard Arabic script. This explanation is found in an article by Raudatul Munawwarah and Sri Mawaddah in a journal titled “The Role of the Malay Script in the Preservation” (Munawwarah & Mawaddah, 2025). This explanation reinforces the view that the use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) in Arabic language instruction—which has led to the phenomenon of digraphia—is one of the methods employed to preserve Malay culture in Thailand, ensuring it remains intact and is protected from extinction.

The phenomenon of digraphia observed at Thamavitya Mulniti School is primarily caused by the widespread use of various linguistic systems by the community in daily life. Digraphia then emerges in Islamic studies, particularly in Arabic language instruction, in the form of the use of Arabic-Malay script as the medium for teaching Arabic. This is also rooted in efforts to preserve the Islamic identity of the Malay community in Southern Thailand. The Arabic language instruction implemented at Thamavitya Mulniti School does not focus on mastering linguistic skills but rather combines spiritual elements with basic Arabic language instruction, aiming to provide students with a foundation in basic Arabic to understand Islamic texts. The use of Arabic -Malay (Jawi) as a teaching aid and introductory script in Arabic language instruction has resulted in a phenomenon of digraphia classified as “synchronic digraphia,” as two writing systems—Arabic-Malay (Jawi) and Standard Arabic script—are used simultaneously in the instruction of the same language, namely Arabic.

The implementation of Arabic language instruction at Thamavitya School illustrates that Arabic language education should not be limited solely to the application and learning of linguistic skills, but should also address the language’s status as a means of revelation or inspiration. Ibn Faris discussed the origin of language from a classical Islamic perspective, as explained by Wildan Taufik in an article titled “Theories of the Origin of Language in Classical Islamic Literature.” In that article, it is explained that, according to Ibn Faris, the origin of language is tauqiifi—meaning that language originally came from Allah and was conveyed through revelation or inspiration (Taufiq, 2016).

Ibn Faris’s view is closely related to the phenomenon of digraphia observed at Thamavitya Mulniti School in Thailand, namely the use of Arabic-Malay script in religious education—including, for example, in Arabic language instruction. Classifying the language as tauqiifi rather than maharah lugohwiyyah is one of their strategies for preserving Malay Islamic cultural

traditions through the use of the Arabic-Malay script (Jawi) in Arabic language instruction.

Ibn Faris's theory is also endorsed by Fahrurrozi et al. In their paper titled "The Language Learning Process at Pondok Pesantren Fahmussalam Al-Aziziyah: An Intuitive Psychology Perspective," they explain that Arabic language instruction should instill a spiritual dimension in students—going beyond mere communicative competence—so that learning the language serves not only as a linguistic exercise but also as a means of drawing closer to God (Ichsan & Kusuma, 2025).

Critical Reflection

The use of Arabic-Malay in Islamic education—particularly in Arabic language instruction—shows that students' literacy practices are influenced not only by curricular factors but also by cultural factors, which make Malay culture not merely a tradition but something deeply intertwined with the Islamic values held by the people of Southern Thailand. Consequently, the use of the Malay language, script, and culture has become something they are obligated to preserve and uphold; therefore, the Arabic-Malay script (Jawi) has been chosen as the medium of instruction in Islamic education, including in Arabic language instruction.

The use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script in Arabic language instruction helps students understand Standard Arabic script because its letters are nearly identical to those of Arabic-Malay (Jawi). This serves as a foundation for learning Standard Arabic script; however, at the same time, it can also pose a challenge for students in understanding the spelling and writing rules of Standard Arabic, which differ from those of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script. However, these challenges can be overcome through teachers' efforts to design learning strategies capable of bridging the use of Arabic-Malay (Jawi) as a medium of instruction for the gradual and systematic mastery of Standard Arabic, so that the preservation of Malay Islamic culture can be maintained and sustained despite the phenomenon of digraphia that occurs in the learning process.

Conclusion

Digraphia is the phenomenon of using two writing systems for a single language or within the same linguistic environment. The phenomenon of

digraphia observed in Arabic language instruction at Thamavitya Mulniti School involves the use of the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script in Standard Arabic instruction, where this script is used to assist teachers in explaining Arabic language rules and translating meanings into Arabic.

The researcher concluded that the digraphia occurring in the Arabic language learning process at Thamavitya Mulniti School falls under the category of diachronic digraphia because the use of the two writing systems—namely, the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script and the standard Arabic script—is limited to specific times and is not used continuously. The success of this method is evidenced by the fact that students understand and are proficient in writing, reading, and even speaking Arabic, albeit still within the classroom setting.

The choice of the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script as a teaching aid is appropriate because, overall, students have mastered this script more than they have mastered Thai script; this is largely due to the prolonged conflict between Siam and the Malay people in southern Thailand. The use of the Malay language, as well as the Arabic-Malay (Jawi) script, is something the Malay community must preserve and uphold, as it represents the Islamic identity of the Malay people in southern Thailand.

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